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SUBJECT: PA AND FATAH CONTINUE TO REJECT ANY DIALOGUE WITH
HAMAS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On August 7, former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh told the press that Hamas is willing to resume Hamas-Fatah dialogue, and his political advisor Ahmad Yusef claimed that Hamas and Fatah are having "secret talks." However, PM Salam Fayyad and Fatah spokesman Ahmad Abd al-Rahman rejected these claims publicly and privately. Fayyad told a visiting Congressional delegation that he will not participate in any dialogue with Hamas and that the lessons learned from a year of failed dialogue with Hamas strengthen his resolve. He added that the PA is the government of all Palestinians and will not negotiate with factions. Abd al-Rahman said PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) will consider dialogue only if Hamas apologizes to Palestinians for its take over of Gaza, recognizes the new government's legitimate authority, and relinquishes power in Gaza. A representative of the President's Office told ConGen political specialist that Abu Mazen wants to push Hamas to recognize the new government. He also said independent PLC member Ziad Abu Amr is involved in low level talks between Fatah and Hamas representatives in Gaza. End Summary.

Hamas Pushes for Dialogue and Claims its On-Going

¶2. (C) At an August 7 press conference in Gaza, former PM Ismail Haniyeh said "there are attempts to open channels of communication between the two sides (Hamas and Fatah). At this moment we cannot talk about a real dialogue, but these attempts could develop into something positive." He said Hamas is willing to "withdraw from the government" to facilitate Hamas-Fatah reconciliation. Haniyeh told the press that dialogue between Palestinian factions should be based on ten pillars: (1) unity of the homeland; (2) unity of the political system; (3) respect for legitimate Palestinian institutions; (4) building of a professional security apparatus; (5) rebuilding of the PLO; (6) development of a legitimate political partnership between Fatah, Hamas, and other Palestinian factions; (7) respect for democratic choice; (8) preventing foreign interference in internal Palestinian affairs; (9) respect for political pluralism; (10) and preserving the right of resistance for the Palestinian people.

¶3. (C) On the same day, Haniyeh's political advisor Ahmad Yusef told the press that "secret talks" are occurring between Fatah and Hamas to find a resolution to the current crisis.

New Government and Fatah Reject Dialogue

¶4. (C) Shortly after these public statements, Fatah spokesman Ahmad Abd al-Rahman publicly denied the existence

of any "secret talks" and said any talks between Fatah and Hamas representatives are "informal and purely individual initiatives." He said Abu Mazen insists that Hamas must apologize to the Palestinian people for its take over of Gaza, recognize the new government's legitimate authority, and relinquish power in Gaza before there can be any dialogue.

¶5. (C) During an August 8 meeting with a visiting Congressional delegation, PM Salam Fayyad said neither he nor the PA will engage in dialogue, and he dismissed an August 8 Jerusalem Post article that claims Hamas-Fatah dialogue is underway. Fayyad said the eighteen months of effort to promote dialogue had failed, and he will not repeat those failures. He added that the PA is the government of all Palestinians and will not negotiate with factions. Fayyad, noted, however that rejecting the idea of dialogue outright is not good politics. "It is not smart practically to reject dialogue. We must look reasonable, but we must also articulate conditions that must be met," said Fayyad. He said dialogue is impossible unless Hamas relinquishes claims to its authority in Gaza and restores security.

Ziad Abu Amr Pursues Dialogue Nonetheless

¶6. (C) Dhafer Nubani, who works closely with Fatah Central Council (FCC) member and Secretary-General of the Presidency Tayib Abd al-Rahim in Abu Mazen's office, told ConGen political specialist that independent PLC member and former Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr is involved in discreet talks between Fatah and Hamas officials in Gaza. He said Abu Amr had facilitated a meeting between Haniyeh and Fatah Revolutionary Committee (FRC) member Ahmad Hillis. Nubani said Abu Mazen did not task Abu Amr and that he believes

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former Hamas spokesman Ghazi Hamed is also involved in this initiative. According to Nubani, Abu Amr used the meeting to push Hamas to return all government buildings, weapons and military equipment in Gaza to Abu Mazen's control. Nubani said Abu Amr's recent meetings in Gaza prompted Hamas' August 7 press statements, but that he has no expectations that this track will produce any results.

Abu Mazen: Hamas Must Accept Terms

¶7. (C) Nubani told ConGen political specialist that during the upcoming months Abu Mazen hopes to achieve two goals: political agreement with Israeli PM Olmert and Hamas' public recognition of the new government. Nubani said if Abu Mazen and Olmert reach a political agreement, pressure will grow for Hamas to accept Abu Mazen's conditions for dialogue and to recognize the agreement. Only then, he said, will Abu Mazen consider dialogue with Hamas. Azam al-Ahmad, head of the Fatah PLC bloc, separately said Fatah will reject dialogue unless Hamas agrees to Abu Mazen's conditions and to early legislative elections.

Comment

¶8. (C) Hamas' public statements about dialogue may have some popular resonance as demonstrated by recent polls. However, there is no indication that Haniyeh will accept Abu Mazen's conditions for dialogue, and the more extreme voices within Hamas, such as Mahmoud al-Zahar, will likely reject any serious dialogue. That said, Hamas makes life difficult for Abu Mazen and PM Fayyad by keeping alive the possibility of dialogue. We can expect to see Fatah free-lancers, such as Ahmed Hillis or Jabril Rajoub, or Independents such as Ziad Abu Amr, seek to promote dialogue largely as a way of promoting themselves. The role of Arab states also bears watching, and efforts by Egypt or others to promote dialogue could greatly complicate life for Abu Mazen and Fayyad.

WALLES